

## THE WILLIAM M. USDANE MEMORIAL AWARD

This award is presented each year to an individual with severe disabilities who has exhibited outstanding achievement and exceptional character as an employee in the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. The award is named for the late William Usdane, former Assistant Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), who worked tirelessly on behalf of people with disabilities.

### Lisa Doell

VGS, Inc.  
Cleveland, Ohio

Lisa Doell starts each workday by walking around and individually greeting all her co-workers in the Power Sewing Division of VGS Inc. One would never guess, but Lisa's daily greeting is much more than a purely social act. It is an important coping technique she employs for overcoming one of the many obstacles she faces in leading an independent and productive life.



Two cerebral aneurysms and subsequent brain surgery eroded Lisa's short-term memory and other neural functions. She has depression, anxiety and agoraphobia—an irrational fear of public or open spaces. Due to her aversion of open spaces and crowds, Lisa's morning routine of greeting each of her co-workers is her way of starting the day by facing down one her greatest fears.

Lisa attacks other challenges with the same "can do" attitude. She combats her short-term memory disability by taking notes to record and retain information and asking for instruction when needed. Today, she works in a public area at VGS with other colleagues and excels as a sewing machine operator—making women's dress slacks, skirts and insect repellent tents for the Armed Forces. She has succeeded by putting aside her apprehensions, maintaining a positive attitude and continually expressing a desire to learn new skills. Lisa is a superlative example of someone who has overcome personal limitations and become one of the top contributors in her division. Her expertise is a testament to her ability and spirit.

### William M. Usdane Memorial Award

#### Established in 1979

Dr. William M. Usdane had a distinguished and diverse career in rehabilitation and was a leader in the movement to provide vocational opportunities to people with severe disabilities. As the assistant commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), he worked tirelessly for people with disabilities. Usdane was both a scholar and an activist. He believed in translating theory into action and used his position at RSA to help create NISH. Because he was with NISH in the beginning, urging the organization to do more to create meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities, this award was established to commemorate his life and work.

NISH remembers the spirit of Usdane by presenting this award named for him to a person with a severe disability who exemplifies the impact that the JWOD Program has on the lives of people with disabilities throughout the country.

"VGS, Inc. prides itself on providing an atmosphere that both inspires and enables personal achievement and provides a path to a brighter future," said VGS President and CEO Robert Comben. "Lisa Doell epitomizes the potential of our environment."

Because of her dedication and work ethic, Lisa has thrived in an environment where consistent change of procedures and techniques is the norm. Her versatility and positive enforcement have created an encouraging atmosphere that is contagious to both co-workers and supervisors.

She communicates immediately to resolve any issue. She takes responsibility for her actions and repeatedly takes the initiative to ensure her assignments are completed correctly and on-time. Also, she shows resourcefulness by working in other departments when pressing deadlines require extra help.

The JWOD Program at VGS, Inc. has enabled Lisa to become a valued employee. Without this program, few would know that Lisa is a wonderful person and skilled employee. She is a living example of the notion that "the only place success comes before work is in the dictionary."

Lisa says, "The Lord has given each of us a gift—mine of the gift of help." That vision guides all aspects of her life. Outside of work, she is always ready to lend a helping hand. She says she enjoys "behind the scenes" work because she believes this is where her assistance matters most. She cares for the children of parishioners during services at her church. Additionally, she frequently visits a nursing home for the elderly where she mends articles of clothing and treats residents to manicures and pedicures. Lisa has distinguished herself within the JWOD Program by always giving her best in every activity.

NISH congratulates Lisa for her hard work in overcoming circumstances that would have discouraged others. We applaud her continued climb on the ladder to success and are pleased to present to her the William M. Usdane Memorial Award as confirmation of her achievements.

**WILLIAM M. USDANE NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL AWARD****James Granderson**

Community Workshop and Training Center (CWTC)  
Peoria, Illinois

James Granderson is unstoppable.

When James began working in janitorial services through a JWOD Program contract at the Federal Court House in Peoria, IL, the first major obstacle he had to overcome was limited public transportation. His solution was to start riding his bike to work each day, no matter what the weather, and has never missed a day of work. The next barrier to employment James faced was memorizing the complicated layout of the courthouse building he cleans, despite his limited reading abilities. He mastered that challenge in a shorter period of time than many of his co-workers who do not have reading or learning disabilities. Finally, James had to learn specialized cleaning skills such as the correct technique for refinishing the very old marble floors in the courthouse building. He mastered that test too.

In addition to his determination to succeed, James is a dedicated, compassionate and warm person who expresses a genuine regard and concern for others. He pays close attention to details on the job and never hesitates to do any task he is asked to perform. He has an outstanding work ethic and often accomplishes the work of two people. Many days, James completes his duties early and then, without being asked, assists his co-workers. His skill, job performance, gentleness and compassion have helped to create a very positive work environment for all.

Outside of his job, James leads a very full life. He is a husband and father who proudly supports his wife and son. He is nearly always willing to work extra hours and, through his employment on the janitorial services contract managed by Community Workshop and Training Center (CWTC), James has been able to increase his earning potential. Today, he can better provide for his family financially through a job that offers new professional challenges, opportunity for advancement and any support he may require to ensure his vocational success.

"The sense of self worth that James has achieved is remarkable," said Gail Leiby, Executive Director of CWTC. "The opportunities afforded to individuals with disabilities working in the JWOD Program are outstanding."

James' co-workers and others employed at the courthouse all like him and typically describe him as "honest" and "sincere." When his bike was vandalized at the courthouse, the security guards were so outraged that they joined together to ensure he would have a safe place to leave it while at work.

The JWOD Program has given James gainful employment and a chance to succeed despite some formidable challenges. NISH salutes James for all his achievements that reflect so positively on everyone involved with the JWOD Program.

**WILLIAM M. USDANE NORTHWEST REGIONAL AWARD****Chad Kooiker**

Goodwill Specialty Services  
Omaha, Nebraska

Chad Kooiker has come a very long way from the quiet and introverted person he was during his initial job interview for Goodwill Specialty Services, Inc. After he was hired by Goodwill to provide grounds maintenance services, Chad overcame his shyness. Today, he strives to socialize with and relate to all his co-workers. Together with a crew of five, Chad is responsible for weed whacking, outdoor trash removal, racking and mulching leaves, watering the grounds and trimming the shrubs at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Omaha—a JWOD Program contract.

Prior to working at Goodwill, Chad was unemployed for many months and, according to his father, he had begun to suffer from severe loneliness. Born with Down syndrome, Chad struggles with his speech and can be difficult to understand. At Goodwill, he has established a special bond with co-worker Greg Washington, who interprets Chad's comments for others. Chad is known now as the social one in the group and, according to Washington, he is an uplifting character who manages to boost everyone's spirits.

In addition to overcoming loneliness, Chad also has greatly improved his physical health since he started working at Goodwill. Prior to his new job, Chad became overweight. His grounds maintenance assignments have helped him to become more physically active and lose weight.

Chad's competitive nature has motivated him to maintain perfect attendance, including being on time for work everyday without exception. He is the most eager member of his team and purposefully works at least 10 minutes past quitting time each day. According to his supervisor, Rick Leinbaugh, Chad performs all of his responsibilities to near perfection and is capable of working with little supervision. He is very aware of his surroundings and only needs to be told instructions once, leading to a recent promotion to the level of operating power equipment.

Away from work, Chad is an enthusiastic athlete who has participated in the Special Olympics for the past 15 years, and has excelled in basketball and softball. Also, Chad is a member of a local hand bell choir that performs at churches and nursing homes.

NISH salutes Chad as a highly deserving recipient of the Usdane Northwest Regional Award. We applaud his dramatic transformation from a shy introvert to an outgoing sports fanatic and dedicated JWOD employee. He sets an exceptional example for all.

## **WILLIAM M. USDANE SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL AWARD**

### **Tomy Kroll**

Goodwill Industries of San Antonio  
San Antonio, Texas

Tomy Kroll is an outstanding example of someone who excels in a work environment where he is constantly challenged. He has been promoted repeatedly since he first began working on JWOD Program contracts at Goodwill Industries of San Antonio. In just a few years, he has rapidly advanced to the position he holds there today of Promotion Board Support Associate.

I am thrilled that Tomy won this award," said Patti Black, Vice President of Work Services. "I wish I could clone him! His doctor told him he was too disabled and could never work and should never work—but boy, does he ever work!"

According to his supervisors, Tomy reflects the very core of the JWOD Program mission. He readily shares that without Goodwill and its JWOD contract at Randolph Air Force Base, it is unlikely he would be employed. But true to what Tomy stands for, his only objective for making that point is to help others with disabilities also achieve job success.

Tomy has had to overcome severe physical disabilities in all of his vocational pursuits. He was born with Spina Bifida, Hydrocephalus and Hyperkyphosis, and has had to endure 22 surgeries. Despite the endless physical tests he has had to endure, Tomy ensures 100 percent accuracy at all times in the maintenance of enlisted personnel records for the Air Force. During the past 15 months, the contract has recorded NO errors whatsoever. What is Tomy's secret? He proclaims that he lives every day to the fullest, grounded by a philosophy that makes you admire his courage. "What I can't do with my body, I do with my brains!" Tomy frequently proclaims.

Off the base, Tomy's greatest passion in life is teaching and speaking, thus, he frequently makes public presentations. He has been the guest speaker at United Way fundraising events; has been interviewed by a local Fox network program; and has attended numerous special programs to share his positive message about giving people with disabilities the opportunity to contribute to society.

Tomy is a superlative example of a person with a disability who has taken full advantage—and then some—of the opportunity and power of work to affirm his dignity, fulfill his dreams and triumph professionally.

NISH applauds Tomy for his obvious intelligence, his huge success on the job and his service as an advocate for others with disabilities.



**WILLIAM M. USDANE PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL AWARD****Lucetta Miles**

Solano Diversified Services  
Vallejo, California

Lucetta Miles made a commitment to overcome challenges that would discourage others when she accepted a job as switchboard operator with no prior experience. Armed with an overarching desire to succeed, Lucetta soon discovered she had made the right decision and the job was a perfect fit.

Lucetta has a rare hereditary disease called familial spastic paraplegia that she contracted after giving birth. It caused severe physical disabilities that forced her to seek assistance finding a new job. Prior to her disability, Lucetta worked as a correctional officer and later managed a successful janitorial services business with her husband. After Lucetta was no longer able to handle the details of that business, she and her husband shut it down. Throughout the trials she suffered pursuing new employment, Lucetta remained positive.

Today, Lucetta is a detailed-oriented and conscientious JWOD Program employee. She provides excellent customer service, inspires teamwork, is an effective problem-solver and demonstrates exemplary communications skills. She constantly strives to learn new job skills and now also serves as a trainer of new switchboard operators.

Lucetta is very active in her local community as a weekend volunteer with the local pumpkin patch attraction for children and during fundraisers at her church. Also, she is an advocate for people with disabilities. Last June, she attended the 2005 NISH Grassroots Advocacy Conference held in Washington, DC, where she passionately expressed her support for the JWOD Program to several members of Congress.

Lucetta's colleagues at Solano Diversified Services reacted with admiration and joy when they learned she had won the regional Usdane Award. "She (Lucetta) well deserves this honor because of her conscientious efforts in advocacy and her role as an employee on a JWOD contract," said Louis C. Chiofalo, President and CEO of Solano Diversified Services.

"It is great to know that Lucetta's hard work and dedication are being recognized with this award," said Omar Celestial, Employment Program Manager at Solano Diversified Services.

NISH salutes Lucetta as both an inspiration and shining example of how the JWOD Program can open the door to vocational success for anyone with hope and drive.

**WILLIAM M. USDANE EAST REGIONAL AWARD****Hilda Travis**

Continuing Developmental Services, Inc. (CDS)  
Rochester, New York

Hilda Travis exemplifies the success one can achieve with a generous spirit, determination and hard work despite formidable obstacles. Her positive, "can do" attitude helps to create a happy and productive work environment for all and as much as Hilda personally strives to do a top quality job, she has distinguished herself through her efforts to help her co-workers succeed equally.

Hilda works at Unistel, the employment services division of Continuing Developmental Services, Inc. in their semi-automated spice room helping to prepare filled spice bottles for shipment by applying the safety seals and labels. She has a physical disability that requires her to use a wheeled walker. Rather than being limited in any way by this challenge, Hilda has learned to use her wheeled walker to increase the number and types of tasks she carries out while maintaining the high standards required in the spice room.

"We are so excited to have Hilda among our work force at Unistel," said Sankar Sewnauth, CDS President and CEO. "She exemplifies our tagline—'It's all about abilities'—perfectly and she proves that determination and hard work create a fulfilling job experience."

At times, the work in the spice room is very hard for Hilda, but she perseveres always. It is a precise endeavor that proved difficult for Hilda to learn at the start. Ultimately, it took several weeks for Hilda to master her assignment, but her persistence paid off and now the spice room is one of her favorite jobs. Hilda takes great pride in having employment she finds meaningful and the opportunity to be a contributing member of society.

"I may not be the first one there, but I'll get there," Hilda said. Frequently she shares that same sentiment and drive with her colleagues. If Hilda sees a co-worker falter, she will help them out without falling behind in her own work. She readily offers words of encouragement to team members who feel overwhelmed on occasion and uses humor to



lighten the mood. Many of Hilda's co-workers look up to her as a source of encouragement and support.

Hilda has endured numerous setbacks, including the loss of a family member to violence. Nevertheless, she remains a compassionate and loving woman who feels strongly that her contributions include both her productivity on the job and the consideration she gives to those around her. Outside of work, Hilda stays close to home and enjoys planting flowers and keeping a garden that beautifies her neighborhood.

NISH is proud to recognize Hilda for her outstanding job performance and generous character that reflect some of the very best attributes of a successful Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program employee.

## **WILLIAM M. USDANE SOUTH REGIONAL AWARD**

### **Toni Stockton**

The Advocacy and Resources Corporation (ARC-Diversified)  
Cookeville, Tennessee

Toni Stockton never quit, never stopped trying, and never lost her positive attitude during her struggle to find and retain gainful employment after suffering a catastrophic injury.

Toni came to ARC-Diversified seeking employment three years after suffering traumatic brain injury following a vehicle accident. The injury caused short- and long-term memory loss; difficulty with speech; vision impairment; loss of movement on her left side; and some alteration to her facial features. Before the accident, Toni was a busy mother of two children under the age of six, the primary caregiver and financial manager for the family, and the sole driver for the family because her husband suffers from seizures too severe to drive safely.

Despite the disabilities caused by her injuries, every medical report emphasizes Toni's positive attitude. She began at ARC-Diversified as a box maker working on the production floor two days a week. Today she works more extended hours making boxes and also performs other production assignments such as wiping cans.

Toni is always willing to carry out whatever assignment she is asked to do with a positive attitude and unflinching determination to succeed. When she first started working at ARC-Diversified, she could not remember how to make a box for more than a few minutes. She just kept trying and over time, she did recall the process and slowly began to memorize the next step.

"Mother, wife, employee, Toni is remarkable," said Terri McRae, CEO of ARC-Diversified. "She is a fabulous woman who has worked hard for recovery with a dignity and grace that few of us achieve in our lifetimes. I have known Toni for over a decade and watched her, her husband and her children endure trauma that would crush people of lesser resilience. Toni reminds us why we are here and why the JWOD Program has such an important place in America's work force."

Today, Toni watches after new employees to make sure they make the boxes correctly and stay out of the way of the tow motors. According to her Job Coach, Cindy Sexton, Toni works hard, has a great sense of humor and is cheerful to everyone.

"Toni is one of my favorite people," said Tim Durm, Chief Operating Officer at ARC-Diversified. "Not only is she a contributing and reliable member of our work force, but her ability to make a contribution to the raising of her family, in spite of her disabilities, is an important factor in her recovery and her success here at ARC-Diversified."

Toni and her husband have reached out to help other families in their local community overcome significant life challenges. Outside of work, however, Toni's top priority is caring for her two sons while her husband works. This is an outstanding accomplishment given her disabilities. She has worked hard to improve her memory; re-learn housekeeping and parenting skills; and regain greater physical agility.

It has been a long and uphill battle for Toni with many setbacks, but her work on a JWOD Program contract has given her back an important piece of her life. NISH admires and congratulates Toni for all she has overcome to establish herself as a productive and very prized JWOD employee.

